

CREATING THE STRATTON COMMISSION—A REPRISE

◆ Edward Wenk, Jr. ◆

Marine Sciences Council

Introduction

In the 105th Congress, both the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate are considering bills to usher in another Stratton Commission, born again. That part-time advisory body became an icon among ocean aficionados as a symbol of commitment to the health of the nation's marine interests. As authorized by P.L. 89-454 in 1966, the original commission was charged with identifying what priority—measured by funds and leadership—is this nation and its government to give affairs of the sea. President Johnson appointed Julius A. Stratton, former president of MIT as chairman, thus the appellation.

Their report entitled *Our Nation and the Sea* was released January 9, 1969. It set forth 120 recommendations to strengthen this nation's stake in the sea with policies and programs to tap the potential of the oceans and integrate its benefits more effectively into the life of the nation. The Commission was assigned a broad set of issues, but deserves credit especially for recommendations to restructure many existing functions and bureaus into a single, high-visibility and powerful agency. Two years later, and considerably altered, their proposal led to the creation of NOAA.

Now, thirty years later, many concerns addressed by that Commission have reappeared. Given its extraordinary reputation, several bills have been introduced to emulate the Stratton exercise: S. 1213 by Senator Hollings, H.R. 2547 and H.R. 3445 by several members of the House. On the premise that these will pass and be signed into law, the origins and performance of the original Commission deserve study to identify factors that would promote future success.

Congressional staff, NOAA, a number of stakeholders and think tanks have studied that proposition and with one exception would restart

Stratton-mode engines. Although carefully crafted and compelling, these surveys suffer from three problems, of amnesia, of myths, and of addictions. There is amnesia about the politics of the oceans and about advances made by presidential leadership assisted by an advisory Council chaired by the Vice President and created by the same legislation. There are romantic notions about the scale and lasting influence of the Stratton Commission. As anthropologist Joseph Campbell has argued, myths preserve continuity of the human experience, but they can excessively raise expectations. Addictions to rhetoric of four decades ago in support of a new initiative may inadvertently block appreciation of major changes in the nation's mood to a commercial culture and aspirations for wealth, to partisan legislative behavior and globalization.

To add another perspective, this study focuses on (1) The legislative history of PL 89-454 creating the Commission, (2) the context which is crucial to understanding the dynamics of policy design and implementation; and (3) the process of appointing an outstanding cadre of Commission members who were critical to the success of the Stratton Commission. Despite Tolstoy's injunction that "The only thing history teaches us is that it teaches us nothing", there are vital lessons to be extracted from past achievements that could help reduce risk of failure. In (4) are added personal observations toward that end.

Chronology of Key Events

The Stratton Commission provides a deep learning experience for both branches of government even though its product was rejected by the President who appointed it and by his successor. It all began on November 10, 1957 with creation by NAS President Detlev Bronk of a Committee on Oceanography (NASCO) that catered many subsequent political events. Dr. Harrison Brown was named chairman. It was sponsored by five federal agencies, the Navy's

Hydrographic Office, its Office of Naval Research, the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, the Coast and Geodetic Survey and the Atomic Energy Commission that was then disposing of low level radioactive waste at sea. They collaborated with oceanographers in deep concern over evaporation of naval research funding after World War II. Their landmark report delivered February 15, 1959 was entitled, Oceanography, 1960-1970 (1) , with five general and twenty specific recommendations. The primary thrust was to double funds over ten years for basic research, applied research, and surveys so as to nourish a relatively feeble enterprise and equip it with modern ships and tools.

Paradoxically, while Sputnik had jump started research in almost every other field, oceanography continued to languish and the NAS report was not enthusiastically received by President Eisenhower's science advisor. Undismayed, Brown and colleagues with street smarts had already paved the way to tickle Congressional interest, especially of Senator Warren G. Magnuson of Washington State who chaired the Commerce Committee and Representative Herbert C. Bonner from coastal North Carolina who chaired the House Merchant Marine and Fisheries. Both committees were likely to have jurisdiction and their staffs had been invited to attend NAS deliberations, especially those held during crises.

On the merits of the case by Harrison Brown, Senator Hubert Humphrey was the first to publicize the report. Other initiatives swiftly followed, championing increases in funds for oceanographic research to strengthen the nation's undersea defense in light of the near-hysterical response to the Soviet surprise. That rationale was later superseded, with a shift to concerns over fundamental weakness in oceanographic research capabilities and the failure to identify a broader stake in the oceans by a nation that had been settled by sea and neglected its heritage.

After the February 15, 1959 release of the NASCO report, the following key events led to the birth of the Stratton Commission

1959

February 17

Special Subcommittee on Oceanography created in

House MM&F and opened hearings, March 5 on the NASCO report.

April 13

Overton Brooks, chair of House Science and Astronautics Committee, introduced bill for categorical oceanographic research grants in NSF.

June 22

Senate Resolution 136 introduced by Senator Magnuson to strengthen oceanography based on the NASCO report; unanimously passed

September 5

Magnuson introduced S. 2692, the Marine Sciences and Research Act of 1960 that became the springboard for sustained interest and his later bills. Coordination of civilian research was assigned to NSF. Passed June, 1960.

1960

July 1

Brooks released report prepared by the Congressional Research Service, Ocean Sciences and National Security (2) to nail down S&A jurisdiction in competition with MM&F. [MM&F won]. The report interpreted "National Security" broadly as more than military and rationalized support for research as more than "beating the Soviets." Instead, it focused on such functions as fishing, shipping, offshore oil and gas, in addition to basic research. Based on the report, the Committee recommended double the NASCO proposed increases in funding, and it drew a bead on management weaknesses in the Executive Branch that resulted from the frantic expansion of research after Sputnik and fragmentation in numerous agencies. It proposed elevating responsibility for leadership and coordination to the tip of the pyramid; to the President.

1961

February 9

Magnuson introduced S. 901 similar to S. 2692

February 13

Oceanographic Act of 1961 introduced by Rep. George P. Miller, to create a Cabinet-Level Council to help the president coordinate oceanic research. [Ironically, this concept from CRS was later adopted

by the Senate but for various reasons the House reversed its position and rejected the implementing Council machinery.]

March 29

President Kennedy accepted proposals from his science advisor's office and transmitted to Congress a sharply increased add-on to oceanographic funding, thus taking the edge off Congressional legislation to energize oceanography. Their focus then shifted to issues of waste and duplication.

1962

June 18

John Dingell introduced the Oceanographic Act of 1962, H.R. 12601 to establish national policy in marine affairs, coordinated by the Office of Science and Technology newly created in the Executive Office of the President.

September 27

Senate passed S. 901 with language of H.R. 12601, then passed by the House. It was pocket vetoed by President Kennedy when his advisors noted that OST was a staff agency and not appropriate to fulfill a line function. Clearly, Congress was chagrined

1963

June 12

Alton Lennon introduced Oceanographic Act of 1963, H.R.6997 after negotiations with the President's science advisory staff so as to overcome objections to the one pocket vetoed

1964

March 19

At the initiative of its staff director, the president's Federal Council on Science and Technology selected its Interagency Committee on Oceanography (ICO) as a show case for effective coordination, and submitted FCST's first report to Congress to demonstrate techniques of effective coordination in all fields of science. (3)

July 9

Magnuson introduced S.2990 to create a National Oceanographic Council at Cabinet level, based on a

study from the newly created Science Policy Research Division of the Congressional Research Service.

1965

January 11

Lennon introduced H.R.2218 similar to earlier H.R. 6997

February 1

Magnuson reintroduces bill to create Council, now S. 944. On advice from CRS, the bill focused on future social benefits rather than science, mindful of Johnson's growing disdain for scientists because of their vocal opposition to the Vietnam war.

June 15

Paul Rogers introduces H.R. 9064 to establish a National Commission on Oceanography. This initiative resulted from frustration in the House that other initiatives had failed to rally support in the Senate, while the House rejected the concept of a Council because the one already mandated for Space Affairs had seldom met; it was largely staffed by friends of the Vice President who had been made its chair instead of the President.

August 5

Senate passes S. 944 as amended, House passes its version with H.R. 9064 attached.

August 19

Senator Claiborne Pell introduces Sea Grant legislation to help fund research.

1966

June 17

Marine Resources and Engineering Development Act of 1966 passed by both Houses June 2 and signed into law by President Johnson as P.L.89-454. It set goals for a long-term, comprehensive policy for marine affairs, and mandated leadership in the President with advice and assistance of an interim cabinet-level Council chaired by the Vice President. It also created a Commission on Marine Science, Engineering and Resources with a broad charter to evaluate national needs and national capabilities, and recommend appropriate governmental structure, not

just to enhance coordination but also to elevate the stature of marine affairs among federal bodies. The organizational medium was to be the message.

The Johnson administration did not support the bill. In fact, his science advisor released a report, *Effective Use of the Sea* (5) that was intended to block the legislation. The Bureau of the Budget opposed it, haunted by the notion of a “wet NASA” sluicing into the treasury. The Navy was quietly trying to sabotage it with stories of a certain veto, nervous about losing its status as the big boy on the block. With Magnuson one of the bill’s parents, and with his close friendship with Johnson —Johnson was best man at his wedding— in no way would the bill be vetoed. But after signature, there was high uncertainty about implementation. It could have been ignored, used to warehouse political cronies, or taken seriously. Johnson adopted the latter course, mindful especially of Magnuson’s hard work.

July 13

President Johnson ordered Vice President Hubert Humphrey to activate the Council and deliver the first annual report in six months.

August 17

Humphrey called first of monthly Council meetings. Wenk was appointed by the President as Executive Secretary

October 15

Sea Grant Bill enacted as P.L.89-688 as a title in P.L.89-454

October 15

Department of Transportation created by P.L. 89-670 with transfer of Coast Guard from Treasury

1967

January 9

President Johnson appointed members of Commission [details later] Johnson asked Humphrey to manage appointments to the Commission and this task was delegated to the Council’s Executive Secretary. Humphrey agreed on a strategy to field the strongest possible membership, widely representing national interests and not just parochial marine interests.

March 9

President Johnson submitted first annual report to Congress as required P.L.89-454. Nine initiatives were announced on international cooperation, fish protein concentrate, Sea Grant, new data systems, estuarine studies, continental shelf surveys, ocean predictions, deep-ocean technology and sub-polar research, with 13 percent increase in funding.

1968

January 17

In a State of the Union Address, President Johnson proposed what was then elaborated in a special message of March 8 as the International Decade of Ocean Exploration developed by the Council.

March 11

President Johnson submitted second annual report with new emphasis on coastal zone management and further increases in civilian budgets.

August 3

Nation’s estuaries to be studied by P.L. 90-454

October

Draft of Stratton report submitted to Council in accord with law. It was reviewed by an ad hoc committee chaired by the staff director with representatives of departments at Assistant Secretary level. They argued it through to the point of unanimous support. Subsequently, the Secretary of Transportation ordered his representative to recant and asked President Johnson to fire the Council’s staff director.

1969

January 9

Stratton Commission released report *Our Nation and the Sea* recommending consolidation of numerous federal agencies into new independent NOAA, and appointment of presidential advisory committee. President Johnson refused to receive the report personally, even from friends on the Commission, because it proposed to transfer the Coast Guard. This was the crown jewel of the Department of Transportation, a department he had fought for years to establish over objections of powerful lobbies that wanted the status quo because of their easy access.

January 17

President Johnson released third annual report, emphasizing new legislation for coastal management, promoting the IDOE and improving framework of international sea law

January 20

President Nixon inaugurated. He reappointed the Council's director.

April 5

President Nixon appointed Commission on Executive Organization with Roy L. Ash named chairman. It would soon recommend against the Stratton proposal for NOAA.

August 8

Senator Magnuson requested Council staff to draft bill on coastal-zone management, introduced as S.2802.

September

Council's director writes directly to President Nixon, not through Vice President Agnew, to advocate continued review of Stratton report.

October 10

President appoints special task group to examine organizational issue; report delivered December 18 favored a weak National Marine Agency. Report was not released until July 9, 1970 because it would anger Congressional advocates of NOAA.

November 18

H.R. 14845 for coastal management introduced on behalf of Nixon Administration, identical to S. 2802 except responsibility assigned to Interior.

1970

January 1

National Environmental Policy Act signed into law, PL91-190.

April

To counter stonewalling by the Nixon Administration, Senator Hollings, Stratton and Wenk met with Attorney General Mitchell who was on intimate terms with President Nixon to enlist his support for a new agency. He could not support a

new cabinet-level entity, but agreed to support creation of a new body within a department, with the horsepower that Mitchell admitted the FBI had in Justice.

July 9

President Nixon proposes to establish NOAA in Department of Commerce by Reorganization Plan No. 4 of 1970. In the absence of Congressional veto, it became law.

1971

January 28

President Nixon appointed Robert M. White to head NOAA. That delay signaled his anger at Congressional end runs.

August 15

National Advisory Committee on Oceans and Atmosphere (NACOA) created by P.L. 92-125, as proposed by Stratton Commission.

1972

The Council is disestablished on recommendation of NOAA and Commerce Secretary on grounds of weakness under Vice President Agnew. With the demise of the Council, the ocean community lost a friend in high places.

Analysis

This calendar of key events exposes the meandering of policy development, generation of basic concepts and set in motion by the political process with its idiosyncrasies. The initial impetus from oceanographic scientists was sustained by a few members of Congress having research constituents, but mainly from their exceptional personal interest. The field had not been preempted by jurisdiction fences; it was unplowed, and there was room to grow "heroes".

Second, rationales evolved from outdistancing the Soviets in a new arena to support for oceanographic laboratories, to a worry over splintering among so many different agencies, to the lack of a clear vision for the oceans and of Executive Branch leadership except for the Navy. That the Congressional

perspective had matured is dramatically revealed by in bill titles, the shift from “oceanography” to “marine resources and engineering development”. By 1964, concepts from the report commissioned by Overton Brooks had been adopted, with the focus on applications in addition to research. Hearings reveal weak lobbying by most private marine interests as compared to the usual energies of advocates. The aerospace industry was stirring, however, over anxiety about tapering of the space effort, but they lacked experience in lobbying as an industry. Most advocacy focused on securing contracts amidst competitive bidding. Although a new Marine Technology Society took an interest, along with an activist maritime press, the awareness of political considerations was naive.

Third, the House of Representatives and the Senate were stubborn in each grasping their original concepts such that differences were resolved only by welding the Council and Commission concepts in one bill. This led to myths that the two organs were competitive. Such a misunderstanding resulted from amnesia about the organic act that recognized the President as band leader, with the Council in a day-to-day role to advise and assist until its authorization expired. The Commission’s main task concerned governmental structure.

In the absence of strong outside lobbies, the Council became a maritime presence in the White House. Between Humphrey’s leadership, a creative staff in the armory assembling ammunition and a receptive Johnson, things happened. The Council’s reports were read by top officials in other governments that soon were attempting to knit together their own splintered maritime agencies. The Commission, on the other hand, was expected to take a long view of national purpose less influenced by an immediate agenda and political tactics and to wrestle with the organizational issue that could not be resolved within the Executive Branch itself because of territorial imperatives.

The President continues to have that mandate today, even though it has not been energetically exercised since 1972. The action-forcing provision for annual reports has been ignored by both Branches of government. There have been few hearings as during Council life.

Many ocean interests refer back to the Kennedy-Johnson years as the golden age of marine affairs. Apart from presidential messages in the annual reports, some 28 initiatives were submitted by the Council to the President and adopted. That commitment by a president has enormous significance because of the president’s role as chief executive officer to set budget priorities, trigger new starts and integrate far flung agency sectors. Presidential statements were symbols of national priority.

If there is any single individual who helped to elevate the strength and visibility of marine affairs, it is Vice President Humphrey. He was chairman par excellence of an activist Council, he visited many oceanographic laboratories, rode their ships, sent prestigious messages to state and professional events of note, and had a congenial press.

The Context

Legislative issues never erupt in a vacuum. Most often, they are triggered by crisis or pressure groups. Whatever the trigger, they are embedded in a context of social, economic, political and geopolitical factors unconnected to the issues at hand but which provide the atmospherics and set the stage for policy decisions. To study the Stratton Commission required the legislative history behind the parent PL 89-454, the Marine Resources and Engineering Act of 1966. In the 1956-1966 run-up to enactment, these factors were influential:

Crisis: The Cold War with the Soviet Union was perceived by the nation as a sharp nuclear threat, a simmering and continuing crisis. Regarding war fighting capabilities, especially in terms of a bomber gap then missile gap, people asked, “Who’s ahead?” The October 4, 1957 Sputnik event added urgency to the sense of a life-threatening competition. When ocean-related issues were pushed for the first time onto the legislative stage in 1959, arguments were advanced even by Harrison Brown with a well-tested ploy of national defense. So did Congressional sponsors of new legislation. In truth at that time, there was no significant underwater threat to the preeminence of the U.S. Navy.

Pressure Groups: It is a paradox that the field of marine affairs flourished in the absence of a palpable crisis or powerful interest groups. The first advocates were oceanographers concerned over shrinkage of naval research funding after World War II. Leaders of three major institutions led the parade, using as a springboard the NASCO study by the National Academy of Sciences. For a short time, public support came from the President of the National Academy of Sciences, Detlev Bronk, until other members of the Academy complained. By 1964, the voices of science were replaced by the aerospace industry, worried about leveling off of funds for space exploration that might follow after the planned lunar landing. Some in the industry were also teased by Navy initiatives to build up subsea technology following loss of the submarine *Thresher*, April 19, 1963. This interest group then found expression through founding of the Marine Technology Society, but at that time contractors were in such competition with each other that they couldn't mount a collective campaign. In any event, their interest was in merchandising hardware, not in uses of the sea. The Stratton Commission heard and tried to respond to these interests with proposals for a massive deep water technology initiative. It was never accepted by either branch of government. The military-industrial complex today is far stronger and more effective.

Offshore oil interests were quite powerful but not interested in the marine environment as such. Indeed, they were satisfied with existing partnerships with the Department of Interior. Fishing interests were splintered by species and by geography. Coastal residents at the time were primarily concerned with beach preservation.

The environmental movement began to stir following Rachel Carson's book, *Silent Spring*, published in 1962, but awareness of threats to inshore waters and wetlands did not arise until the late 1960s. In short, offshore oil, shipping, and fishing seemed satisfied with existing arrangements. Seaborne passenger travel was in decline because of jet service overseas. Water related recreation was spotty. Environmentalism was in its infancy but the general public was treated to extraordinary undersea adventures by the photography of Jacques Cousteau, accompanied by his poetry on human connections to the sea.

Political Realities: Soon after Congress became aware of marine policy issues, several members saw opportunities to expand jurisdiction. In the House, a competition arose between Bonner of Merchant Marine and Fisheries and Overton Brooks who chaired Science and Astronautics. S&A had a plate full with a fledgling space program, but MM&F was looking for new challenges or face extinction. Claims were staked by both, arousing some media interest. Soon followed a flurry of bills focused on expanded research, the diffusion of civilian research through many different small agencies, and the need for coordination and leadership. Members willing to invest political capital to push legislation generally were from districts with oceanographic research interests.

Marine policies did not arouse partisan support or tactics. Indeed, success of the Council resulted from its even-handed approach to both Houses and both parties. Although the Council was a creature of the Senate, there was high respect for initiatives of the House and a commitment to meet their goals as well. This led to the unprecedented step of the Vice President submitting testimony at one of their hearings. Indeed, it was the Council that included funds for the Commission in its initial budget, without which the Commission would have had to wait many months and appeal to Congress for funds to get started.

On the Congressional side, virtually all legislation had support from minority members initially and through enactment.

Even though Executive Branch agencies had sponsored the NAS study on the decline of research, none became conspicuous advocates. Eisenhower and his science advisor rejected increased funding. Indeed, he was already furious at the damage to his balanced budget, declaring that the power of the military-industrial complex after Sputnik was bad for the nation's economic health. The agencies hands were tied.

Under Kennedy, that coolness changed. He was constitutionally more adventurous and invited proposals for new starts. He had a personal history of sailing and naval service during World War II that led to his affection for maritime issues. His one-shot

increase in funding was welcomed by civilian agencies, and temporarily cooled Congressional ardor, but that soon changed when Members began a traditional war dance about waste and duplication and insisted on better integration of so many small activities. By 1964, also, Members had shifted their focus to policy issues, rather than programs, a major step of maturity.

That elevation in issues continued under President Johnson. Among other things, the Council knew he was hostile to science because the scientific community was pecking at his Vietnam policy. On the other hand, Johnson entertained new starts as did Kennedy when rationalized in terms of social and economic benefit, not science for its own sake. Council staff persuaded him to support the IDOE because of its potential contribution to world order, plus a focus on such issues as food from the sea and environmental management that had come on the political screen.

Although Nixon accepted some leftover Council proposals that were already developed under Johnson, he drew a conservative cloak, barring more initiatives.

Role of Staff: Throughout the development of marine affairs and legislatively based policy, staff were highly influential. Dan Markel in the Senate and Jack Drewry in the House were especially attentive. From preparation of the Brooks report, through drafts of bills for Magnuson, Lennon, Rogers, and others, creative efforts of CRS staff were welcomed. Within the Executive Branch, staff stewardship played a role in enhancing credibility of the ICO, the congenial relationship with President Kennedy and later Vice President Humphrey, the barrage of new initiatives from the Council and the gentle nudging for reorganization by two presidents in the face of standard opposition by OMB.

Media: Maritime interests seldom earned headlines except with disasters of a major oil spill such as with the Torrey Canyon, or loss of life on ferries. The maritime press was splintered by industries, shipping, oil and gas, fishing. The editors of two marine newsletters, however, were aggressive and perceptive in following developments in marine affairs and reported in a mode that helped stakeholders recognize what was happening behind closed doors. As much as

any other factor, the newly minted marine affairs media sustained interest by partisans that otherwise might have faded from lack of focus for collaboration. Industrial users of the sea never were fully on board.

Appointments to the Commission

The organic legislation provided for a membership of fifteen from federal and state governments, industry and academia, augmented by four Congressional advisors. With agreement to recommend a prestigious Commission, one with genuine horsepower, the Council's staff sorted out some 900 nominations.

The process began with a shopping list of marine interests including scientists, but there were other considerations. Looking ahead to submission of the report to the President and Congress, it was essential to seek individuals from states represented by committee chairs and also by the minority members; home states of the President and Vice President, individuals having close rapport with the President, having media experience, having wide geographical representation, having a national, prestigious stature. To satisfy all these requisites while limited in number of appointments, required that individuals should simultaneously meet several qualifications.

Meanwhile, the trade press were angrily attacking the Council for blocking appointments in the belief that the two bodies were in competition. The more volatile members of the press kept gnawing at that issue until the Commission reported.

The most critical appointment was that of chair. By good fortune, Humphrey was able to persuade the first candidate Julius A. Stratton to accept the key role. Apart from his personal gifts of character and intellect, Stratton brought the patina of president emeritus of MIT and then chairman of the board of the Ford Foundation. Few others could have been as effective in mustering interest and camaraderie of members, wholesome relationships with the Council, members of Congress and the outside lobbyists who were salivating over prospects of a major new infusion of funds for a wide range of projects, especially of high technology for deep ocean exploration. The rest is history.

Lessons Bearing on Success of a New Commission

1. Although rationales changed between 1956 and 1966, when P.L. 89-454 became law marine affairs were linked to broad goals of social policy. Is this true with pending bills?

2. Momentum thirty years ago was imparted by the national excitement of the Soviet space surprise and by Kennedy-Johnson dynamism as much as by lobbies of stakeholder interest groups. How does today's situation compare regarding lobbies and national mood?

3. Powerful members of Congress of both parties, activists all, invested political capital because of their personal enthusiasm rather responding to vested interests, to a popular ground swell or to an effervescent media. How does Congressional advocacy compare?

4. Among factors that influence policy making and implementation are attitudes and values of the President. Given today's bi-polar Washington, how does the President stand?

5. This is vital because, while the Congress sets policy directions, execution depends on Executive Branch performance. Where do marine affairs stand on their agenda?

6. Membership of the Stratton Commission had much to do with its effectiveness. Does the pending legislation provide opportunities to recruit top caliber participants rather than make it easy for elected officials to create a rubber stamp or pay off political debts ?

7. When P.L. 89-454 was passed, Congress expected immediate action by the Council to rectify perceived deficiencies. They were also impatient to see the Commission generate proposals for a new agency strong enough to defend budgets amidst vigorous competition. What are the basic hopes of today's Congressional advocates?

Personal Views on Creating a New Commission

I am an unequivocal advocate of a national ocean policy that relates the oceans to human affairs,

especially those having conspicuous national interests. That condition engaged two Presidents of the United States during what some recall as the "golden age," 1966-1971. Since then, all elements of public and private involvements have grown in size and importance, but the central focus and grass roots interest has been lost. Creating a new Stratton Commission is a concept around which a new start could be rallied, but its success critically depends on the legislative charter now under review.

As an ancient mariner, I had the privilege of being present at the birth of the Stratton model through four successive appointments. As first science advisor to Congress in the Congressional Research Service in 1959, I analyzed the NASCO report and made recommendations for Congressional initiatives. Then appointed to President Kennedy's staff as director of the Federal Council for Science and Technology, I chose the Interagency Committee on Oceanography to showcase coordination among nearly 20 agencies. Congress then requested my return to found the Science Policy Research Division in 1964 where I helped advance the legislation leading to PL 89-454. On its enactment in 1966, I was appointed by President Johnson as Executive Secretary of the Marine Council created by that Act. One of my first assignments for the President was to nominate members of the Stratton Commission, then to assist in their work and vet their report through the Council.

Here are some lessons that bear on success of a future commission:

(1) Marine Affairs deals with technology more than with science, recognizing technology as more than planes, trains, automobiles and ships. It is a social delivery system involving a network of public and private organizations that apply specialized knowledge to meet human needs and wants. Government has six roles: (a) contributing to vitality of a capitalist economic system; (b) exercising fiduciary responsibility for common property resources; (c) providing for the national defense; (d) funding public works beyond the financial capacity or risk horizon of the private sector; (e) sponsoring research and education and engaging the globalization process; and (f) protecting public and environmental safety through regulation.

The pending legislation seldom reflects the role of technology and is relatively silent on the national defense and related roles of the Coast Guard and Army Corps of Engineers. That omission as a key element of national ocean policy can stir bureaucratic animus.

(2) This time around, the Congress had such limited hearings before advancing its commission bills that there is no authentic sense of a national constituency. On a broader scale, some say the national mood is “every person for themselves,” and “survival of the (economic) fittest.” In this atmosphere and with the high noise level in our society, marine lobbies are not conspicuous. Content analysis of newspaper and TV news reveals low media concern except for highly localized problems or crises such as with Exxon Valdez. The environmental movement is of major importance but it has lost the critical role occupied in the late 1960s leading to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. There is no parallel with ocean constituents that pressured the Stratton Commission for a more powerful agency in the federal constellation and funding of aerospace contractors for deep underwater exploration.

During the three years of Stratton Commission life, national attention was mustered by the Council with initiatives by the President and Vice President. Without those episodes of high visibility such as in a State of the Union message, and without initiatives by Council staff after the Commission folded its tent, the Commission might have been totally ignored

(3) Although rare, amidst a repertoire of other issues, and in the absence of palpable lobbies or crisis, some members of Congress invested considerable time and exercised leadership over an extended interval to advance marine affairs. There were continuing hearings over four years. That commitment isn't obvious today. Instead, to those outside the beltway, the appearance is one of a partisan circus.

(4) The President as the nation's systems manager plays a key role in identifying national priorities. As new legislation is considered, the President's views are critical as to whether pending bills would be signed or vetoed, and if signed, whether implemented vigorously. Three decades ago, marine science looked doomed when it only ratcheted science budgets, until

it focused on technology. Even then, Executive Branch enthusiasm was low and bills would have been vetoed except for the close personal relationship of Magnuson with Johnson. How a President reacts depends significantly on such relationships and other subtle factors, and on dispositions of presidential staff. With the present legislation, an approach to the White House, probably through OSTP, is not evident.

This lack of attention to the President's role is also reflected in neglect of the Council's annual reports. There is no compendium of messages signed by the President on coastal zone management, seabed arms control, attention to Arctic affairs, restoration of the Great Lakes, the International Decade of Ocean Exploration, Sea Grants, oil spill prevention and cleanup, acceleration of ocean surveys and data buoys, etc. All are documented in *The Politics of the Oceans* published in 1972 and summarized in 1995 in *Making Waves*.

(5) Meanwhile, several agencies more potent than NOAA appear in opposition and will have their voices heard in OMB and in their respective authorization committees. Part of this opposition lies in the legislation neglecting national defense as part of ocean policy and also foreign policy consideration such as in sections 4 (a) 5 and 6 in PL89-454 which were unexpected triggers for Johnson's support.

(6) It is hard to measure performance of the Stratton Commission because there has been no evaluation of response to its 120 recommendations. It is known that the package proposing massive funding for hardware has been ignored. The proposal for NOAA has been discussed. The Commission deserves exceptional grades for its diligence, perception of opportunities, comprehension of marine affairs and complex relationships such as in Law of the Sea to other policy arenas. Leadership by Jay Stratton is a model.

The proposed legislation, however, has an arcane system of appointments of members that opens the door to partisan selections and thus conflicts, to split loyalties of members, and to insider lobbying. Providing for volunteer staff also increases vulnerability to powerful lobbies. With so little control by the President over selection, there is a risk of veto. There is also a risk of findings that could reflect partisan ideology, leading to privatization of NOAA.

The commission scope and implementation strategy also deserve comment. When the Stratton report was delivered, some other presidential staff characterized its “kitchen sink” approach, with far too many proposals of vastly different scale of impact. Most dealt with programs and not policies. It was also criticized as arriving two weeks before President Johnson was leaving office when he was in no mood to consider any proposals. The Commission could have been more prescient and cut its scope to deliver the report in time to lay the groundwork for presidential mulling. The present broad scope could inadvertently lead a new commission to try the impossible, especially if it fails to stay on the policy track.

(7) Section 8 of a pending bill would repeal PL89-454. That would remove the present framework

for marine policy until a new one would be drafted and introduced perhaps two years after enactment, and put in force in a third year at the earliest. Indeed, there is a chance that it might not be replaced at all. To be sure, the existing policy has not kept up with changing times, partly from lack of interest and initiatives in both branches of government and in the fragmented and weak ocean constituency.

I believe, however, that repeal of the present policy is unnecessary because it does not inhibit whatever initiatives are anticipated in other provisions. Indeed, one of the first tasks a new commission might undertake would lie in updating existing law. In any event, the notion of a master policy covering all dimensions of marine affairs is as illusory as trying to have a master policy for terrestrial affairs. Many if not most issues do not stop at land’s end.